

collecting zone in the stream, followed by the subsonic or supersonic extraction of the liquids into an outlet stream from the radially outer section of the collecting zone.

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15. (NEW) The method of claim 14, wherein a shock wave caused by transition from supersonic to subsonic flow is created by inducing the stream of fluid to flow through a diffuser.

REMARKS

Claims 1-15 inclusive remain in the present application. The claims stand as rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, claims 1-9 and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) and claims 11 and 12 stand as rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a). The claims are also provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting over US patent application No. 09/869,652.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph

A basis for this rejection was said to be that claim 1 calls for a wellhead "choke" and no structure for a choke was described in the specification or figures. The above amendment eliminates the word "choke", leaving the term "wellhead" with out the modifier "choke". Applicant submits that a choke is a common element of a wellhead, as can be seen from web sites from any wellhead equipment provider, for example, www.Masterflo.com/Products/Chokes, www.angelfire.com/me/bidzian/Pchoke, www.ABB-controlvalves.com/atwork/pcv.htm, and www.oceanteachsys.com/brochure/Electro/index.htm. A person of ordinary skill in the art would know what was referred to as either a choke, or a wellhead. Elimination of this word from claim 1 also obviates this basis for the rejection.

A basis for this rejection was also stated as the existence of non equivalents as alternatives. The above amendment separates these alternatives into separate independent claims. This basis for the rejection is obviated.

Other basis for the rejection included use of the term "it", a typographical error in claim 2, the word "optionally" in claim 7, and lack of antecedent basis for "the shock wave" in claim 4. The above amendments correct each of these. These basis are also therefore obviated.

Each of the basis for this rejection are therefore respectfully traversed, and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e)

Claims 1-9 and 12 stand as rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) based on WO 99/01194. This is not a U.S. patent or patent application. Rejection based on this reference under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) is therefore not proper. Recent amendments to section 102(e) may be less than clear, but section 706.02(a) of the MPEP, explaining application of the amended section 102(e), makes it clear that a reference under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) must be "a U.S. Patent or SIR with a filing date earlier than the

effective date of the application". The WO publication is not a US patent or patent application. This rejection is therefore respectfully traversed and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is based on WO 99/01194 in view of Kelly et al. '691. For the reasons given above, WO 99/01194 is not prior art against the present application, and therefore this rejection is respectfully traversed and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

Provisional Rejection Under the Judicially Created Doctrine of Obviousness-Type Double Patenting

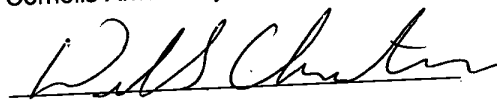
Claims of the present application stand as provisionally rejected over US patent application No. 09/869,652. Applicant was unable to locate an application with this serial number, but is aware of application No. 09/869,654, which is also subject to a provisional obviousness type double patenting rejection over the present application. Applicant would be willing, upon indication that the claims of the scope of the present claims are patentable subject matter, to provide a terminal disclaimer with respect to Application No. 09/869,654. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that this rejection be held in abeyance.

Each of the rejections being traversed, allowance of the present claims is respectfully requested. If the Examiner would like to speak with applicant's representative, please feel free to contact Del Christensen at (713) 241-3997.

Respectfully submitted,

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enclosures- petition for one month extension of time
redlined copy of amended claims and specification

January 1, 2003

1. (Twice Amended) A method for removing condensables from a natural gas stream upstream of a wellhead [choke] connected to a subterranean formation using a downhole inertia separator in which droplets and/or particles are separated from the gases and the gas from which the condensables have been removed is collected, characterized in that the method further comprises the steps of:

[(A)] inducing the natural gas stream to flow at supersonic velocity through an inertia separator comprising a conduit having an acceleration section in which the gas stream is accelerated to a supersonic velocity thereby causing [it]the gas stream to cool to a temperature that is below a temperature at which condensables will begin to condense forming separate droplets and/or particles; and

B. transporting the gas and/or the condensed condensables to a wellhead [and/or re-injecting it into the subterranean formation from which it has been produced, or into a different formation, with the proviso that not all of the collected gas and condensables are re-injected into the same reservoir zone of the same formation].

2. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 1, [wherein]where in a swirl imparting section, a swirling motion is induced to the supersonic stream of fluid thereby causing the liquid droplets to flow to a radially outer section of a collecting zone in the stream, followed by the subsonic or supersonic extraction of the liquids into an outlet stream from the radially outer section of the collecting zone.

4. (Twice Amended) The method of claim 3, wherein [the] a shock wave caused by transition from supersonic to subsonic flow is created by inducing the stream of fluid to flow through a diffuser.

7. (Twice Amended) A well completion system for producing gas from a subterranean formation comprising a wellhead, a wellbore containing a tubing extending downhole from the wellhead, and an inertia separator comprising:

[optionally,]a swirl imparting section that imparts a swirling motion to the gas; and

a collection section wherein a gas stream containing reduced amount of condensables is collected; characterized in that the inertia separator comprises an acceleration section wherein in use gas from the subterranean formation is accelerated to a supersonic velocity and condensables are condensed.

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